

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5730

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY KIGALI

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

US MISSION USUN NEW YORK 0620

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BUJUMBURA 0971/1

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINS, PINT, MPOL, BY

SUBJECT: THOUGHTS ABOUT THE BURUNDI COUP AT D DAY PLUS FOUR

REF: BUJUMBURA 0953

1. SUMMARY. WE APOLOGIZE FOR SOME OF DETAILS IN THIS TELEGRAM WHICH WILL NOT INTEREST ALL INFO POSTS, BUT THIS IS WRAP-UP MESSAGE EMBODYING INFO WHICH FOUR NATO AMBASSADORS HAVE EXCHANGED HERE. IT REAFFIRMS CONCLUSION OF REFTEL THAT NEW BURUNDI LEADERSHIP HAS NOT ESSENTIALLY CHANGED THE POWER RELATIONSHIPS AMONG TUTSIS, MUCH LESS BETWEEN HUTUS AND TUTSIS. INDEED, THE QUESTION IS STILL OPEN OF HOW MUCH CHANGE THERE WILL BE BEYOND COSMETIC TINKERING WITH GOVERNMENTAL AND PARTY STRUCTURES; RESCHUFFLING (INCLUDING OUSTER) OF SOME LEADING CIVILIAN, AND A FEW LEADING MILITARY, PERSONALITIES; AND THE INAUGURATION, AT LEAST FOR A TIME, OF A MORE VIGOROUS AND OSTENSIBLY PURPOSEFUL ADMINISTRATION OF NATIONAL AFFAIRS. END SUMMARY

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2. BURUNDI'S "SECOND REPUBLIC" (MICOMBERO'S "FIRST" WAS LAUNCHED ON NOVEMBER 28, 1966) WAS NOT GIVEN BIRTH BY NEW FORCES WITHIN THE NATIONAL SOCIETY, BY TRIBAL OR ETHNIC RIVALRIES, BY ECONOMIC OR SOCIAL STRUGGLES, OR BY MOTIVATIONS OF HATRED OR VENGEANCE. RATHER, THE NEW REGIME FOLLOWS A PERIOD OF GROWING MALAISE, ALMOST DESPERATION, AMONG LEADING TUTSIS NOT ONLY THAT MICOMBERO HAD BECOME INCOMPETENT, BUT THAT HIS INCOMPETENCE WAS ALSO THREATENING NATIONAL STABILITY, WHICH IS MOST DESIRABLE FOR TUTSI SELF-PRESERVATION. OF COURSE, THE NEW LANGUAGE OF SPEECHES AND DECLARATIONS COUCHES MATTERS IN MORE POLITICALLY ACCEPTABLE TERMS, SUCH AS ENDING CORRUPTION AND HELPING THE DOWNTRODDEN WHO WERE CHEATED BY MICOMBERO'S MISRULE, BUT NO OBSERVER WHOM WE HAVE MET SO FAR IN BUJUMBURA EXPECTS SERIOUS EFFORTS AT ROOT AND BRANCH CHANGE TOWARDS ACTIVATING THE MASSES, MODERNIZING RURAL INSTITUTIONS, EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR HUTUS, OR DIVIDING THE (SMALL) NATIONAL PIE MORE EQUITABLY.

3. THE NEW LEADERS, ESPECIALLY THE THREE MEN CLEARLY AT THE TOP, COLONELS BAGAZA AND NZOHABONAYO AND LIEUTENANT COLONEL NZAMBIMANA, HAVE DEMONSTRATED FORESIGHT, PRUDENCE, CONSIDERABLE EFFICIENCY, A GOOD SENSE OF PRIORITIES, AND SUBSTANTIAL POLITICAL ACUMEN. THEY MAINTAINED EXCELLENT SECURITY AMONG THE SMALL CIRCLE OF ORIGINAL PLOTTERS, CHOSE THE DATE CAREFULLY, QUICKLY PRODUCED A SOUND PLAN FOR A VERY SHORT-TERM INTERIM ADMINISTRATION, MOVED RAPIDLY TO REASSURE NEIGHBORING STATES AND OTHER INTERESTED GOVERNMENTS, ORGANIZED IMPRESSIVE DEMONSTRATIONS OF SUPPORT FROM THE CAPITAL'S POPULACE, AND BEGAN CASTING ABOUT FOR LONGER-TERM SOLUTIONS OF GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE. IN THE LATTER REGARD, THEY HAVE APPOINTED AN "EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE" OF ABOUT A DOZEN OFFICERS TO DRAFT A NEW CONSTITUTION, AND ONE BURUNDIAN EXPERT HAS ALREADY APPROACHED A FRENCH LEGAL ADVISOR FOR GUIDANCE. APPARENTLY, SOME THOUGHT IS EVEN BEING GIVEN TO INCLUDING SOME MECHANISMS FOR POPULAR CONSULTATION, BUT WE SHOULD NOT READ TOO MUCH INTO THESE PRELIMINARY MUSINGS. IN ANY EVENT, THE UPRONA PARTY IS TO GET A THOROUGH OVERHAUL IN STRUCTURE AND PERSONNEL, AND EXAMPLES OF THE FUNCTIONING OF SIMILAR UNITARY PARTIES IN RWANDA AND ZAIRE ARE BEING ACTIVELY SOUGHT.

4. AS OF THE MOMENT, THE JUNTA SEEMS IN NO RUSH TO REAPPOINT MINISTERS, WHETHER MILITARY OR CIVILIAN: IT APPARENTLY FINDS THAT THE VARIOUS DIRECTORS GENERAL IN DIFFERENT MINISTRIES CAN CARRY

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ON DAY-TO-DAY BUSINESS ADEQUATELY AND WILL BE ADEQUATELY OBEDIENT. WE GATHER THAT SUCH FORMER MINISTERS AS RWURI, MPOZAGARA, MINANI, BIZINDAVYI, BIGAYIMPUNZI, AND PROBABLY SIMBANANIYE ARE DEFINITELY TO BE DROPPED. ON THE OTHER HAND, OTHER MEN, SUCH AS PLANNING CHIEF BIHUTE, EX-FOREIGN MINISTERS BWAKIRA AND BIMA-ZUBUTE, ATTORNEY GENERAL NDUWAYO, AND UNIVERSITY RECTOR BARAKANA SEEM TO BE A GREATER OR LESSER DEGREE IN THE FAVOR THE LEADING OFFICERS. THE LATTER HAVE ALSO TAKEN A FEW OF THE YOUNGER AND

BRIGHTER PRESIDENTIAL STAFF, SUCH AS JURIDICAL AND POLITICAL AFFAIRS DIRECTOR NICIMPAYE, TO WORK DIRECTLY WITH THE JUNTA ON SPEECHES, LAWS, ETC. THERE ARE ALSO SOME PLAUSIBLE RUMORS THAT A NUMBER OF THE MOST RESPECTED AMBASSADORS WILL BE CALLED HOME FOR NEW TOP JOBS, INCLUDING NZEYIMANA IN WASHINGTON, HICUBURUNDI IN PARIS, NDABAKWAJE IN BONN, AND PERHAPS SHIRIMANGA IN BRUSSELS. THIS WOULD BE SAD NEWS FOR THE COUNTRIES TO WHICH THEY ARE ACCREDITED, BUT GOOD NEWS FOR IMPROVED GOVERNMENT HERE.

5. THERE IS EVERY REASON TO THINK THAT THE NEW REGIME WILL BE GENTLE AND RELATIVELY GENEROUS WITH MICOMBERO AND OUSTED GENERAL NDABEMEYE. IN FACT, A WELL-PLACED INTERMEDIARY OF THE JUNTA HAS ALREADY HINTED TO THE BELGIAN AMBASSADOR THAT NDABEMEYE COULD PERHAPS BECOME AN AMBASSADOR SOMEWHERE. MADAME MICOMBERO AND THE FAMILY ARE LIVING NORMALLY IN BUJUMBURA, AND THE JUNTA IS SHOWING THEM APPROPRIATE SOLICITUDE.

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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BUJUMBURA 0971

6. FATHER BARAKANA, THE UNIVERSITY RECTOR WHOSE FIGHT SINCE LAST MARCH AGAINST EDUCATION MINISTER SIMBANANIYE, AND INDIRECTLY

AGAINST THE PRACTICES OF THE MICOMBERO REGIME, HELPED SUBSTANTIALLY TO PRECIPITATE W SHOWDOWN, SEEMS FAIRLY CLOSE TOO THE NEW RULERS, AND CERTAINLY IN DIRECT TOUCH. I HAVE HAD A VERY LONG TALK WITH HIM ABOUT THE FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES THAT ARE ESSENTIAL IF BURUNDI IS REALLY TO MAKE ANY PROGRESS. IN PARTICULAR, THE ALL-PERVASIVE AND DEMORALIZING CORRUPTION IN GOVERNMENT AND SOCIETY (INCLUDING THE MILITARY) MUST BE DRASTICALLY CHANGED BY A NEW EXAMPLE AT THE TOP, AND SERIOUS EFFORTS MUST BE MADE TO TACKLE THE HUTU-TUTSI ETHNIC PROBLEM. BARAKANA TOLD ME THAT THE LATTER IS THE KEY ISSUE FOR BURUNDI. UNLESS THE REGIME HAS A LONG-TERM PLAN TO CONCILIATE THE TWO ETHNIC GROUPS, BURUNDI CAN MAKE NO PROGRESS AND WILL FACE DISASTER AS A NATION. IT IS CLEAR THAT BARAKANA WILL TRY AS MUCH AS HE CAN IN HIS OWN PRUDENT AND DEVIOUS WAY TO IMPRESS ON BAGAZA AND COMPANY THEIR PATRIOTIC RESPONSIBILITY TO REFORM THEIR OWN CORRUPT WAYS AND TO PROVIDE SENSIBLE POLICIES AND LEADERSHIP ON THE BURNING ETHNIC QUESTION.

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7. NONETHELESS, BARAKANA SAYS THAT NO ONE CAN TELL HOW MUCH REASONABLY TO EXPECT FROM THE NEW MEN, OR, AS HE PUT IT, "WHETHER WE WILL SOMEDAY NEED A THIRD REPUBLIC". THE ONLY LEADER WHOM HE RESPECTS AND KNOWS WELL IS THE FORMER PUBLIC WORKS MINISTER, EDOUARD NZAMBINANA, A HIGHLY QUALIFIED CIVIL ENGINEER AND CAREER ARMY OFFICER (WHO ALSO HAS RECENTLY SUCCUMBED TO THE TEMPTATIONS OF CORRUPTION). THUS, IT WILL BE VERY MUCH A WAIT AND SEE PERIOD FOR ALL OF US BEFORE WE CAN APPRAISE THE NEG GAIN FOR BURUNDI FROM THE TAKEOVER OF NOVEMBER ONE. BUT, FROM AN IMMEDIATE WESTERN FOREIGN POLICY VIEWPOINT, WE CAN SAY THAT, AT THE LEAST, THERE HAS BEEN NO CHANGE FOR THE WORSE, SO FAR.

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